

Human Resources

PROGRAM

BRIEF1

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Technical Assistance Brief



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Mission and Goals

Human Resource program activities in transit will face real challenges as we move toward the 21st century. The changing entry level workforce (primarily minorities and women), along with increased technological developments make it difficult to keep current. With these factors, managing human resources becomes even more essential. The transit industry must explore: vigorous and effective recruiting; careful selection of employees; well-crafted and effective staff training and development; and, improved methods to accurately assess and evaluate employees.

Human Resources, by definition, attracts, develops and maintains a quality work force. FTA's human resource efforts have and will continue to investigate measures to recruit, develop, train and retain quality personnel in the transit industry. Unfortunately, with all the factors that demand transit's attention, the vital nature of human resources is often overlooked. Four primary objectives in FTA's human resources program will help gain industry acceptance. These are:

- Improve performance and increase productivity in the transit workforce;

- Increase competitiveness and cost-effectiveness of public transportation;
- Enhance the academic community's research and education involvement in support of transit; and
- Increase transit industry-oriented training and development opportunities in higher education for minorities, women, the disabled and the underemployed.

From the beginning, the FTA (formerly UMTA) human resource program reflected a cooperative effort between the Federal government and the transit industry. Job titles and duties have changed but the basic relationship has continued. The Human Resource program develops those close ties to create cost-effective activities that meet real transit needs.

Program Highlights

While many FTA sponsored human resources programs have been beneficial and intriguing, the Standardized Bus Operator Training Program and the Regional Transit Training Center Demon-

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Program Highlights

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stration are portrayed because of their ratio of minimum dollar investment and maximum payoff to the transit industry.

□ Standardized Bus Operator Training Program

This 3-year, \$3.5 million dollar cooperative effort with the AFL-CIO Appalachian Council (a technical assistance arm of the AFL-CIO) resulted in the development and distribution of the first formal transit specific bus operator training program ever produced in this country. The program is currently in use at over 500 transit systems nationwide and is also used in the military and in a number of foreign countries.

□ Regional Transit Training Center Demonstration

Another example of the close working relationship that exists

between the transit industry and the Federal government resulted in the development of a regional transit training center. Located on the west coast, the program involved industry experts from a number of local transit agencies who shared knowledge and experience with their peers through workshops and seminars on subjects ranging from as supervisor training to scheduling. The demonstration produced training material still in use and, included over 40 transit systems from 13 states.

□ Workforce 2000

The U.S. Department of Labor's popular study, Workforce 2000, presented the changes likely to alter the nation's demographics and visible structure of the workforce by the year 2000. Not only is the growth of the workforce slowing dramatically, but its composition is shifting. Almost 2/3s of new entrants to the workforce this decade will be women. Non-whites, women and immigrants together will make up more than 5/6s of the net additions to the

workforce by the year 2000. As conditions change, the proportional shares of the workforce will also.

The workforce is changing demographically. While these demographic changes will alter the transit workforce visually and socially, it won't change its ability to perform. But educational levels of the workforce can effect performance. According to the Department of Education, Center for Educational Statistics, the number of bachelor's degrees earned each year will decrease by the year 2000. Thus the competition for college educated workers is likely to grow increasingly intense in decades ahead, as the supply of educated workers declines and the demand increases.

Proper application of human resources techniques and preparation can, however, ease the projected difficulties. By keeping the existing workforce current with technology, transit properties could reduce their need for new hires as the pool of potential employees decreases.

Destination Excellence

In 1990, the Utah Transit Authority (UTA) was awarded a grant to study excellence in the transit industry. Under the direction of the UTA, a steering committee of transit executives from properties all over the nation assembled to consider the project process. Applying the grant's purpose, UTA and the steering committee surveyed the industry for projects, programs and practices

representing transit innovation and excellence. The over two hundred identified programs were then discussed by the committee in terms reflecting private sector concepts of excellence.

Thirty-six innovative programs were chosen for in-depth review and consideration. Of these thirty-six, one dozen were selected for inclusion in the showcase video, "Destination: Excel-

lence." An additional twenty-five were highlighted as "Transit Great Ideas."

Lastly, UTA produced a reference guide and final report documenting the study. Ideally, this publication will enable communication between properties, agencies and authorities, thereby aiding their efforts to excel.

■ Building a Foundation

Often, the strain put on human resources receives little time or attention when a new technology is introduced. The new equipment, the warranties, the field reps on site, appearing and disappearing repair manuals take precedence until the initial excitement of the new technology fades into the reality of day-to-day maintenance and operations.

To the surprise of many, training and staff preparation have long been allowable costs in the FTA capital grant program. Properties such as Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) have included training and workforce development as a routine part of their capital programs. The challenge requires acknowledging the impact that new technology will have on performance, productivity, while linking human resources to capital development at the earliest possible time.

In order to tackle the challenges and opportunities that face transit and human resources (an ever-changing technology, a potentially less educated workforce, fluid demographics, a shrinking pool of new entrants into the workforce, and other issues) we must plan for the future. FTA's human resources program will continue to meet its goal of assuring that the transit industry has access to an adequate, skilled and capable workforce with a broad spectrum of skills.

Specific FTA programs designed to meet the wide range of industry needs fall into six major areas. They include:

- **Recruitment, Selection and Retention:** Focuses on establishing industry-wide requirements and standards for similar job categories;
- **Training and Development:** Focuses on the National Transit Institute and the development of training reflecting both federal and industry interests, including efforts linking human resources with capital development to smooth the implementation of new technology;
- **Labor/Management Cooperation:** Focuses on facilitating communications and building trust;
- **Educational Outreach:** Focuses on preparing and attracting a quality workforce for entry into the industry at all levels. Also gaining faculty and student interest through the University Transportation Centers;
- **Innovation and Assessment:** Focuses on introducing new technologies into human resources and training activities;
- **Program Evaluation:** Focuses on assessing both the success of FTA's human resource efforts and those related industry experiences.

■ National Transit Institute

The existing workforce needs training if it expects to remain a viable force in the new transit environment. To this end, Section 29 of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) contains a provision that established the National Transit Institute (NTI) at Rutgers University. Working with FTA and an advisory committee reflecting all components of the transit industry, NTI will develop and implement a national program of training and education for federal, state, and local transportation employees. Course and program areas at NTI fall into three categories. They are:

- Training and education to fulfill specific federal program responsibilities;
- Training and education to meet the self-defined needs of the transit industry; and
- Technical support and dissemination of information and referrals for all transit related clients by means of a clearing-house and referral services.

Eight federal program areas will be developed into courses through a joint effort between FTA specialists and NTI staff. These program areas (ISTEA Implementation, ADA Requirements, Systems Planning/ Intermodalism, DBE Staff Training, Financial Planning, Project Planning, Environmental Issues, Third
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National Transit Institute

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Party Contracts, and ADA Requirements) cover a variety of courses of direct benefit to the transit industry

Industry-defined training will be responsive to needs identified in cooperation with the NTI Advisory Board. Course subjects are being designed to meet the needs of all levels of transit employees.

The development of a national clearinghouse means collecting and cataloguing the what, when and where of all available transit training opportunities. Whether this takes effect as a telephone hotline and/or a simple shareware computer bulletin board, its aim will be to help transit systems avoid training duplication and improve efficiency of training efforts.

University Research

This program promotes and provides the opportunities for selected schools to conduct short term research and training. It also supports policy related studies and investigation of specific public transportation issues. Because it expands the number of schools involved beyond the University Transportation Centers Program, the University Research Program exposes additional students and faculty to public transportation issues and increases outside interest in the transit industry.

Managerial Training Grants

Over the years, FTA's Managerial Training Grant Program has seen many changes. In 1968, the Urban Mass Transportation Act established the Managerial Training Grant Program (Section 10) to assist the transit industry in training its managers, technicians and professionals. One hundred fellowships were awarded annually to support training at both Northeastern and Carnegie-Mellon universities. Courses were transit specific, popular, and produced alumni that have gone on to leadership roles throughout the industry. The Act was later amended to promote cost effective training of more employees over shorter periods of time.

Recent grants include state transit associations as sponsors on behalf of the small and medium-sized agencies, and grants to large single agency transit systems, based on comprehensive training plans reflecting organization training needs.

University Transportation Centers

The Surface Transportation and Uniform Relocation Assistance Act of 1987 authorized the University Transportation Centers Program. In 1991, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) reauthorized the program. The original legislation required that grants be made to nonprofit institutes of higher learning who would in turn establish and operate transportation centers in each of FTA's ten established regions.

ISTEA added three new national centers: Transportation Management, Research, and Development at Morgan State University; Industrial and Transportation Productivity at New Jersey Institute of Technology; Rural Transportation Center at the University of Arkansas.

Each of the Regional and National Centers prepares an annual plan reflecting finding and projects for the up coming year. Centers are required to match each Federal dollar.

